

Dear future students and their families,

As you know, the Australian Federal Government is currently proposing to dramatically restructure the way higher education is funded. The changes it wants to introduce are going to affect how much you pay and the kind of education you get for the money you spend. Many of us who work in higher education think these changes are rotten and must be opposed.

They plan to reduce funding for students in most study areas, including STEM. Education Minister Dan Tehan's reform package includes illogical plans to increase the amount students have to pay for certain degrees. Arts, humanities, and social science students will end up paying [the whole cost of their degrees](#) from their own pockets, while law and other students will also [pay much more](#). The Minister believes these degrees don't produce future 'job-ready' graduates. [This is simply not true](#), as shown by the [Government's own data](#), which demonstrates that [students with degrees in arts and social sciences are just as employable](#) as those with [degrees from other disciplines](#). Indeed, the most common degree among Ministers themselves is a combined Arts/Law degree. [Eleven of the twenty-three federal cabinet ministers have arts degrees](#).

So why introduce reforms driving a wedge between study areas? All of the [independent analysis](#) confirms that the proposed changes will [reduce funding](#) for students in most study areas. And why is the Government proposing this when we know it's likely to have a [disproportionate effect](#) on [women students](#) and [Indigenous students](#)?

The truth is, no one really knows, because the Minister won't answer those questions. The Minister's Office [hasn't provided any modelling](#) to show how its reforms will affect future students like you. Many of us working in Higher Education think these reforms are a [bad plan for students, for economic recovery and Australia's future](#).

Why should students pay more for their education when there is [no guarantee that more government funding from those increased fees will flow into the sector](#)? Australians who want a tertiary education should be able to choose from a diverse range of study areas [without being penalized for those choices](#).

So, what can we do about it?

We need to make sure these reforms don't get passed into legislation. We need to ask the executives in our universities to support us, and if they won't, insist that they explain why. We need to [write to our elected members of parliament](#) at the state and federal levels to ask them where they stand on this issue and ask them to support us.

But there are other, bigger questions we need to ask about our universities. The crisis we're currently experiencing has been brought home by COVID, but goes deeper than that, and has been coming for a long time. We have far too many staff at our universities who are on [precarious short-term contracts](#), while [executive salaries are off the charts](#) and will continue to rise unless the [power of university councils to rubber-stamp those salary rises](#) is reigned in. Across the country, we're set to lose anywhere between [20,000](#) and [30,000](#) jobs. But there is nothing in Minister Tehan's package to address this massive hit to the tertiary system. Nor has there been any indication from the Federal Government that it intends to do anything about it. Meanwhile, a number of Australia's universities are sitting on [huge cash reserves](#), but remain tight-lipped about how much of their revenue continues to be spent on [real estate development, branding, marketing, and external consultancies](#).

It's time for a new model of university funding. It's time for real reform.

#Blockthebill #rejectTehanReforms #notgoodenoughViceChancellors #fundUnfairly

BUG: Better University Governance Research Action Group

September 2020

Useful Links/References

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